

Statement by Congressman Pete Stark In Support of Our Troops and Our Security

Wednesday, 14 February 2007

I rise today in strong opposition to the President's proposal to send more than 20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq. Today's non-binding resolution is an important first step. After its passage, I will encourage my colleagues in Congress to take further steps to end the War in Iraq.

February 15, 2007

Statement by Congressman Pete Stark

In Support of Our Troops and Our Security

Madam Speaker, I voted against the original resolution authorizing President Bush to take military action against Iraq. As a Member of the Out of Iraq and Progressive caucuses, I have and will continue to call for the immediate withdrawal of American troops.

I rise today in strong opposition to the President's proposal to send more than 20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq. Today's non-binding resolution is an important first step. After its passage, I will encourage my colleagues in Congress to take further steps to end the War in Iraq.

When a scientist uncovers facts that contradict a theory, he or she throws out that theory. But when President Bush learns of facts that contradict his theories, he throws out the facts. As a member of the reality-based community, I continue to be amazed by this President's disregard for objective truths.

The President, however, isn't just a scientist experimenting with chemicals in a laboratory. He is an executive whose decision to take us to war under false pretenses has adversely affected the lives of millions of Americans and Iraqis. The costs of the nearly four-year old conflict are grave.

More than 3,100 brave American servicemen and women, including at least 325 from my home state of California, have already died in the war. An additional 23,000 plus have been wounded. Estimates of the number of Iraqi civilians killed since the invasion run even higher, from 47,000 to 70,000. All at a cost of \$379 billion dollars to the American people. That's more than \$1250 for every man, woman, and child currently living in the U.S.

But these are facts. President Bush is more interested in ludicrous theories.

In the run-up to the war, Bush speculated that Iraq possessed nuclear weapons. When intelligence officers suggested that might not be the case, he ignored them. To date, no weapons of mass destruction have been found.

Bush also hypothesized that the attack would turn Iraq into a liberal democracy. When academic scholars wrote that Iraq's history and culture didn't suggest such an outcome was likely, he dismissed them. Today, despite the election of an Iraqi Assembly and formation of an Iraqi government, the country is in a full-fledged civil war.

During the past four years, the President has repeatedly theorized that America was making progress in Iraq, and that "success" was just around the corner. I remember, in particular, Bush's summer 2003 statement that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended," his summer 2004 claim that we were "turning the corner" abroad, and Cheney's summer 2005 reference to an insurgency in its "last throes." Despite these promises, the situation in Iraq has gotten worse every year, not better.

My favorite declaration came this past summer, when the President said that the formation of a new Iraqi government represented a "turning point."

Unfortunately, the body count in Iraq continues to grow. This past July, an average of 110 Iraqi adults died each day, the deadliest month of the war for Iraq. In October, militia attacks spiked 22 percent. In December, more than 100 American troops were killed, the third deadliest month of the war for the United States.

But the November elections did represent a turning point — in the United States. The Bush Administration no longer has a Republican Congress to lick its boots. What's more, voting on this resolution will soon suggest President Bush doesn't even have the support of his own party.

When the President in January suggested sending additional troops to Iraq, Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle criticized his foolhardy proposal. Senator Chuck Hagel, Republican from Nebraska, termed it "Alice in Wonderland," thinking that would "represent the most dangerous foreign policy blunder since Vietnam."

Retired military personnel weren't much more enthusiastic. Former General Barry McCaffrey called the surge "a fool's errand." Retired Colonel Paul Hughes said "sending more troops to Baghdad is like pouring more water in the sands of Al-Anbar. It's just going to disappear without accomplishing anything."

I couldn't agree more. The President's proposal to escalate the war in Iraq in the naive hope of winning a lasting peace is another ludicrous theory that contradicts all available facts.

I strongly urge my colleagues to vote yes and take this important first step to end the War in Iraq and bring all of our troops home.